

LOU BARLETTA

11TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

**TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

CHAIRMAN
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS,
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**Congress of the United States
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November 16, 2015

Governor Thomas W. Wolf
Room 225
Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

I write to urge you in the strongest terms possible to reconsider your plans to accept the so-called "refugees" fleeing Syria and welcome them to Pennsylvania. As a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, and also its Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, I implore you to suspend cooperation until a dependable system is in place to check the background of those seeking refugee status.

As you doubtlessly are aware, one of the attackers in the Paris terrorist assaults is believed to have entered the European Union through Greece as a Syrian refugee. In my role on the committee tasked with overseeing much of the security apparatus of this country, I have had the opportunity to speak directly with some of our best and most experienced national security experts. They have told me that properly vetting these refugees is a difficult challenge at best and nearly impossible at worst. These are professionals who are best positioned to know what our intelligence and analytical capabilities are, and I strongly recommend that you consider their warnings.

In February, I questioned Federal Bureau of Investigation Assistant Director for Counterterrorism Michael Steinbach regarding this very topic. He testified that the United States does not have "systems in places on the ground" in Syria to collect enough information to properly screen refugee program applicants. In June, Dr. Seth Jones, the Director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at the RAND Corporation, testified that the United States has in Syria "far fewer human collectors, far fewer signals, intelligence, and other capabilities. And so in that sense, it has much fewer, it has a much weaker ability to collect information that will be useful for the vetting process." In the same June hearing, Thomas Fuentes, the retired Assistant Director of the FBI, testified that "There's no FBI office on the ground in Syria. We have no reliable partner there to gather information from." And finally, in a hearing on October 21, 2015 – less than one month ago – Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson pledged to be vigilant about vetting the refugees, but admitted, "It is true that we are not going to know a whole lot about a lot of the Syrians that come forth in this process, just given the

nature of the situation." Secretary Johnson then underscored the seriousness of the predicament by reminding us that "in our world, one failure is the equivalent of 10,000 successes." With these stern cautions about our failings in refugee evaluations, it seems shortsighted to trust that Pennsylvania will be receiving refugees who will have been thoroughly vetted.

With all these facts considered, I appeal to your concern for the safety of your fellow Pennsylvanians and ask that you reverse your policy of accepting the so-called "Syrian refugees." Already, the governors of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Michigan, and Texas have announced that they will not be cooperating with the federal relocation program. I urge you to direct your administration to do the same.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lou Barletta". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Lou Barletta
Member of Congress